1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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197 If the future viability of the myth is open to question, that of the language bond is not. A common language is a bond whose strength can hardly be overestimated; for pervasiveness and necessity no bond can match it. There are dialectical differences, particularly between north and south; a few quite regular sound shifts may cause brief difficulties in communication, and a few words have different meanings or are known only in a particular region. Nevertheless, there is almost complete mutual intelligibility. The Santal themselves are deeply [123] cognizant of language as a basis for intimacy and often indicated to me their desire that I properly learn their language. What little progress I made in this direction was greatly appreciated and always increased the intimacy which the Santal were willing to afford me. The much greater proficiency in Santali that my wife developed allowed her to be more of a Santal than I. As with the origin myth, Santali provides links with the neighboring Mundari-speaking people, though here intelligibility is not always satisfactory.

184 This is not the place to chronicle the numerous ceremonies, 776 rituals, ritual paraphernalia, deities, and religious concepts which the Santal hold in common. Apart from those important deities that belong exclusively to the various social units (house, local lineage, village, and the multi-village *Pargana*), there are a series of closely associated deities that belong to all the Santal. 776 These deities are worshiped in a variety of contexts but their 778 special abode is the "Sacred Grove" (*Jaher*), a clump of trees,* lying just beyond each village. The Sacred Grove is particularly the residence of *Maraṅ Buru*, a kind of "national spirit of

[361] [824] * These trees are left standing during the initial clearing when the village is established. They are largely *Shorea robusta* (*Sarjom*).

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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177 796 monies celebrated at approximately the same time, e.g., Sakrat (Hindi: Sankranti), and Dāsæ (Hindi: Dasserah). However, these ceremonies are celebrated with a number of distinctive Santal practices, including animal sacrifice, worship at the Sacred Grove of Santal deities, etc.

177 178 648 The pattern of Santal-Hindu relations is thus one of Hindu domination and exploitation combined with considerable cultural influence. In the nineteenth century the Santal responded to increased Hindu pressure with a number of revolts which ended in defeat. These defeats must have indicated to the Santal that their position could not be improved by armed force nor by any other political means. Following these defeats acculturation and assimilation increased. At the same time there were attempts to curtail emulation of Hinduism and to combat assimilation, indicating the existence of counter-forces favoring solidarity. The advent of the market, population pressure, and increasing wealth differences among the Santal which developed during the latter part of the nineteenth century significantly affected the processes of acculturation and assimilation.

The Advent of the Market

177 • 361 648 311 The spread of the market, British Indian law and British protection led to a greater influx of Hindus into the hitherto sparsely populated Chotanagpur plateau. This Hindu influx plus the general growth of population, both Hindu and tribal, rapidly reduced the amount of unexploited land. The Santal record is full of examples of hiving off and forming new villages, new local lineages, and, no doubt, new sub-clans. The *bustee* of Daredih itself, which is now filled with industrial

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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workers, was founded as an ordinary agricultural village not more than about sixty years ago. But such opportunities decreased throughout the nineteenth and this century. One inevitable result was to increase wealth differences and to make them more permanent.

A major consequence of increased wealth differences has been the strain placed on internal solidarity by "envy" (*hisạ*; Hindi: *hinska*) and even more by fear of "envy." What this term conveys is concealed malicious intent based upon desire for what another possesses. Though Santal society has long been plagued with accusations of witchcraft, the notion that its practice is almost invariably deliberate and that it arises from envy is of modern origin. Though it is recognized that men may be "envious," it is thought that females most often are guilty and that it is only they who practice witchcraft. Fertile grounds for envy, and attendant witchcraft, appeared when wealthy Santal began using their capital to hire other Santal, to loan money, paddy, and seed at interest, to buy forest land, and even in a few cases to invest in various small-scale enterprises. Relations arising from these investments are often strained and a source of resentment. Envy also arises from observation of what wealth procures in terms of traditional Santal pleasures and from its use in settling disputes.

Aside from the exacerbation of "envy," which increased wealth differences produced, the market imposed other, more general strains. It is difficult to square the basic reciprocity of relations in a kin society like that of the Santal with the impersonal and contractual relations of the market. Though the Santal struggle over land with as much ferocity as any peasants, they find it hard to insist on strictly market relations with other commodities, especially if pressed by kinsmen. A few Santal

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

VI. VILLAGE LIFE

a. Searching for a village site and omens.

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The Santals do not build houses for themselves away from others; they build villages, and there they live together in one place. To found a village three to four men will go with a leader and investigate a forest. When they, after having entered the forest, see any of three kinds of quails flying, they say: Some day in the future a village here will be deserted. But if they see these birds sitting quiet on their eggs, or they meet a tiger or see the footmarks of a tiger, they say: Some day in the future we shall become a very populous village and we shall be settled here. Thereupon, continuing to investigate, they select a place of this kind, viz., where there is dry ground, where there will be good highland and homestead fields, where ricefields can be prepared and where water is easily had. They are pleased with what they have seen and return home.

Thereupon they one day go to take omens. They take along with them two white and one speckled fowl, a little sun-dried rice, oil, sindur, and water in a new thin-necked earthenware pot. Where the leader intends to build his house, there he goes in the evening and makes five spots with sindur. Close to the sindur spots they drop some small heaps of sun-dried rice, and beside this they also set down the pot with water. Near this same place they tie the fowls in a row, just so far away that they cannot reach the rice. Thereupon they make an invocation: O Sun god (Sin bonga) in heaven, like a bamboo mat thou art spread, the four corners, the four worlds thou hast covered, and ye, the Five the Six of the earth, in your name, as ye see here, in the virgin soil, the virgin forest we are seeking omens; this ye show to us, the milk as milk, the water as water; having judged, show it to us. Thereupon they go somewhere to spend the night.

Next morning they go there and look. If a big fowl-feather has fallen down, they say about this: A few grown up persons among us will die; and if small feathers have fallen down, they say about this: Children will die here in future. And if no feathers at all have fallen, this is excellent, no one will soon die there. And if the fowls have left droppings round about the place, they say about this: All in the village, well-to-do and poor, we shall support ourselves well. If they have left droppings in a heap in one place, they say about this: The headman alone will become wealthy. And if in two places, they say: The headman and his deputy will become wealthy. And if in three places, then also one

2: Skreferud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

of the villagers will become wealthy. In the directions in which the ants have carried off rice, in so many directions it will be necessary to bring up bongas. If the water in the narrow-mouthed pot has dwindled a little, they say about this: A couple of years we shall have a scarcity of water. And if the water has not dwindled at all, they say: We shall not have any scarcity of water. If the fowls have disappeared, if there is no rice, and the water in the narrow-mouthed pot has dried up, they say: This place is ill-fated; and they leave it; they will not found a village there. 361 787

But if there are good omens from the fowls, the rice and the water in the narrow-mouthed pot, then they dig a small four-cornered hole. On three sides of this they put the dug-out earth. With this earth they again fill the hole up. If it is filled with the earth on two sides, they say: We shall get full crops here; and if no earth is left (in filling the hole), they say: It is inauspicious here. Thereupon they seek omens in another high place inside the boundary that they have walked up, and in the name of another village headman. They continue to act in this way, until they get full good omens. They ultimately get this.

b. On settling down.

Now one day they return and make a shelter of sticks leaning against each other, for the leader. He, the leader, who is to become the headman of the village, cuts down the first tree. Nowadays, after they have investigated the forest, they ask the landowner for permission; formerly, before landowners made their appearance, there was nothing of this kind. 361

Together with the leader they now divide between themselves the homestead fields. On their respective homestead fields they each put up a hut for themselves, and each a pen to keep their cattle in. Thereupon they go back to their old homes and call on each other saying: When shall we start? They then take their children and all they possess with them and go to the new village. The time of moving is the months of Phalgun and Chait (middle of Febr. to middle of April). Now all of them clear the jungle for the homestead fields, and the trees they have cut down also serve them for house-timber. Any remaining timber, etc., they burn away. They build houses. Running along the middle of the place they keep a village street, and at the end of this they arrange a sacred grove. [778]

c. Bringing up the bongas in the sacred grove.

To bring the bongas up in the sacred grove they get three to four men who are to become possessed[1]. They come together at the village headman's. The headman pours out water for the persons to be possessed, that they may wash. The men to be possessed then wash their feet and sprinkle water on their head. Thereupon they sit down in a row beside each 782 776

[1] See Dictionary s. v. ruin.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

[P.46]

CHAPTER II

HABITAT AND POPULATION

131 [133] In this pear-shaped Bharatbarsa ranges after ranges of hills belonging to the present provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, roll on towards Central India. This wide area lies roughly between 20° and 28° North Latitude and 83° and 92° East Longitude. Santal Parganas, Bhagalpur, Monghyr, Manbhum, Hazaribagh and Singbhum now claimed by Bihar; Mayurbhanj and Balasore now falling within Orissa; and Birbhum, Bankura and Midnapore still belonging to Bengal, fall within the area and form the habitat of different aboriginal tribes, of whom the Santals are the objects of our present study. Speaking [361] approximately, the Santal settlements are found distributed over an area of 350 miles from the Ganges to the Baitarani, fairly bisected by the 87° Eastern Longitude.

133 [137] 139 A bird's-eye view of the topography of the portions of Bihar and of Orissa falling within our purview will reveal large areas of rock, laterite and gravel. Hills after hills form into ranges, bare of vegetation during the summer months and green again with the rains. Clusters of Sal trees (*Shorea robusta*), Mohua (*Bassia latifolia*), Karam (*Adina*

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

gods and call themselves Hindus. We, for our part, have seen many of these reclaimed Santals, (and it was claimed by the authorities of the Hindu Mission that they succeeded in reclaiming a lakh of people within a short time in the Santal Parganas)... a procession of white-robed Santals wearing Hindu dresses, carrying tall sticks and anointed with sandal-pastes. Some of them carried drums and flutes while going to offer pujas to the Goddess Durga, cheek by jowl with the Hindus.[1]

For our part, we think that the task of the Hindu Mission is an easier one when we remember that 586,499 persons were found to be Hindu Santals in Bihar and Orissa in the census report of 1931, and in the Mayurbhanj State 254,596 persons returned themselves as Hindu Santals in the last census. It is also worthy of note that the Mayurbhanj State has always shown eagerness to extend to the Santals all privileges open to others. Cow-killing is prohibited within the State, and how far Hindu ideas have penetrated into Santal society will be apparent even to a casual observer.

Added to these, it must be remembered that the Santals do not live in water-tight compartments of their own, although their hamlets are separate from the rest. The Hindu "Kamar" does work for them,

1 The Hindu Mission in Bihar and Orissa came into existence in 1925.

3: Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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smile, "O, there are the "Bongas" (*evil-spirits, deities*)." Thus finishes the daily routine of their lives.

The annual round of their life is a string of agricultural activities, working as day-labourers when there is no work to do at home, tribal feasts at the Holy-grove of the village or at the house of the Headman or other villagers, ceremonial hunts as during the "Baha" (*Flower-festival*), dances enmasse during the tribal festivities or at moon-lit nights and fish-gathering on a quest of joy and food combined.

And in between, if there is any leisure time they spend it in gathering fruit, making nets and in occasional hunts to the neighbouring forests and indulge in the delights of the chase of their primitive semi-hunting life.

Santal Cottages

Typical Santal cottages almost invariably stand on both sides of a straggling "kulhi," (*village lane*) where pigs squeal and fowls flutter about.

Each cottage is a two or three-roomed affair. On the floor corn is strewn for being aired. The plinth made of mud, rises one to three cubits high, the average being a cubit and half. It is beautifully blackened with a dye made of burnt straw plastered with cow-dung. The walls of the houses are made of bamboos or "sal" logs and are generally plastered

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956

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[Introductory, P. xii]

SANTAL PARGANAS

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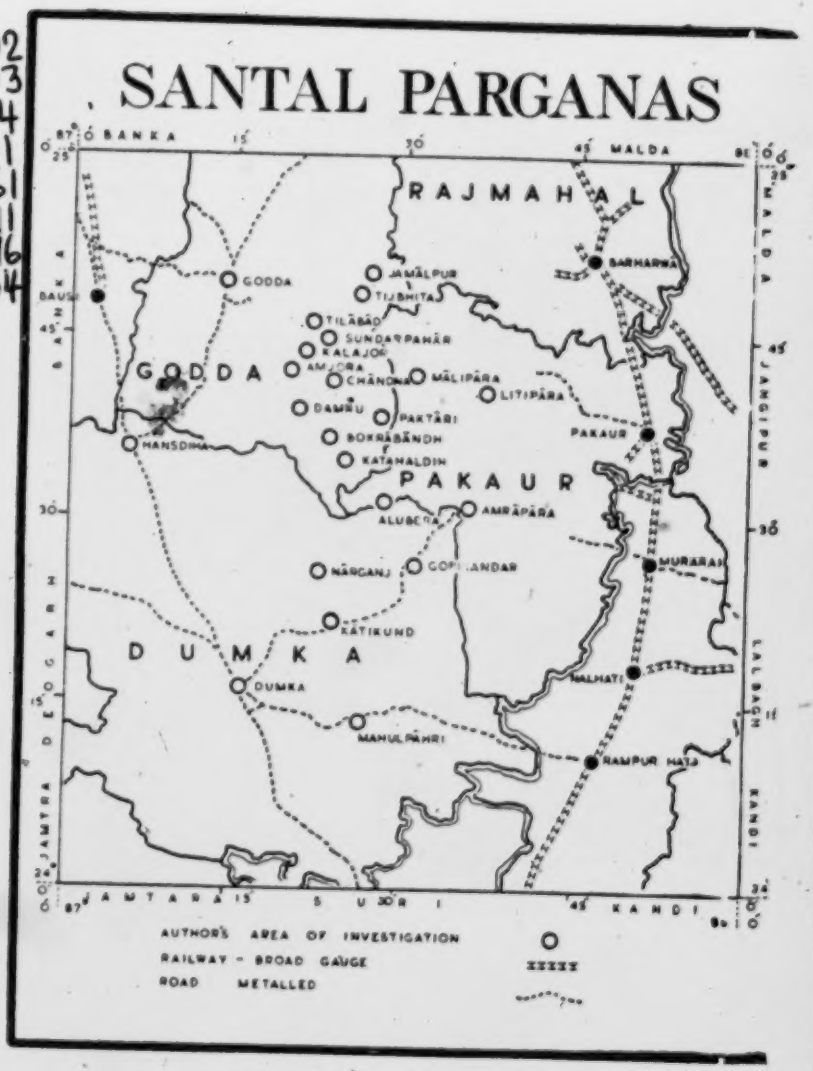

N. B. Scale one inch = 13.5 Miles.

1 [i.e. on original page. - Analyst]

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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SANTAL PARGANAS

[P.1]

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The Santal Parganas is a district within Bhagalpur Division in Bihar, lying between 23° 40′ and 25° 18′ North latitude and between 86° 28′ and 87° 57′ East longitude. It is bounded on the north by the districts of Bhagalpur and Purnea, on the east by Malda, Murshidabad and Birbhum ; on the south by Burdwan and Manbhum ; and on the west by Hazaribagh, Monghyr and Bhagalpur. The principal range in the district is that of the Rajmahal Hills. They consist of a succession of hills, plateaus, valleys and ravines, the general elevation of which varies from 500 to 800 feet above sea level. A large portion of the range is included in the Daminikoh (the skirt of the hills). In the Santal parganas within the four subdivisions Dumka, Godda, Pakur and Rajmahal, the Santals live in largest numbers. They live in Damin areas, where previously one could not enter without the permission of the Commissioner. The Santal living on the very tract of the Aryan overflooding Northern India (in fact very near the sacred triangular spot between Benares, Rajgir and Gaya which witnessed the phenomenal Upanishadic speculation of the days of Janak and the rise of Jainism and Buddhism) could not but have been influenced by these and in their turn must have considerably left their mark on the folk culture of Northern India. If there is any culture which still carries the impress of the underlying philosophic speculation and order of thought that was wide spread in India prior to the rise of the Dravidian culture, it was very likely the belief and

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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SANTAL PARGANAS

CHAPTER II

Material Culture of the Santal.

The Village : The Santal villages with their houses on both sides of the street are situated on the plains. These villages are not well fortified. In each village only one unpaved avenue can be found, the width of which is about twenty five to thirty feet and the length is equal to the length of the village. There are tall trees at intervals on both sides of the avenue which make the path shady. In a big village generally twenty to thirty houses can be seen and in a small village there are only ten to twelve houses. In each village a Majhisthan is built, where Kulidrupe[1] (Panchayat) takes place and taxes are collected by the head-man of the village, and there the Manjhi Haram (head-man) worships the Pilchu Haram and Pilchu Burhi. In almost every village a Jahersthan can be found which is nothing but a cluster of Sal (Shorea robusta) trees where the Santals worship their village deities. The water supply of the village is derived from a streamlet which runs nearby. The Santal villages are very neat and clean and all the villagers take particular care to keep it so, and scavenging is done by the pigs and dogs which help in keeping the village neat. As soon as the houses have all been erected and the village established, some trees such as mango, jack-fruit etc. are planted ; the Satals[2] have a belief that these trees bring prosperity. The Headman's house is generally built more or less in the centre of the village and close to the Majhisthan. The villages are generally known by their place names as Sunderpahari, Chandna, etc.

361 • [363] 344 346 651 622 778 312 364 231 245 622 342 103

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[1 Erratum: i.e., kulidrup. 2 Erratum: i.e., ^ Santal. -- Analyst] ^

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
AW42 Santal AW42
SANTAL PARGANAS

361 787 The Santals observe certain omens before selecting the site for the village. Below are mentioned a few which are mainly based on what an old Santal guru known as 'Kolean guru' related to the late Rev. L. O. Skrefsurd about ninety years ago.

[825] About half a dozen Santals go inside a forest with a leader to select a site for their village. If they see any of three kinds of quails (a genus of gallinaceous birds to which the domestic fowl belongs) flying over there they say :

"Some day in the future a village founded here will be deserted".

[825] But if they see these birds hatching their eggs or if they come across a tiger on their way or see marks of its paws on the ground they say :

"Some day in the future a village founded here will thrive and become prosperous and we can stay here contentedly".

361 In selecting the site for the village, the Santals are very particular about the following things :—

The ground should not be damp and there should be enough good highland for fields and homestead. There should be enough land for cultivation and water should be readily available.

[344] [346] [778] In a Santal village two things are very important, one is the Mahajhisthan, the place made for the spirit of the original headman, and the other is the Jahersthan, the scared grove where the Santals worship the Bongas.

344 346 **The Majhisthan :** The Majhisthan or raised platform is an important place for the Santals. They build this place generally, in the centre of the village, near the

5: Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

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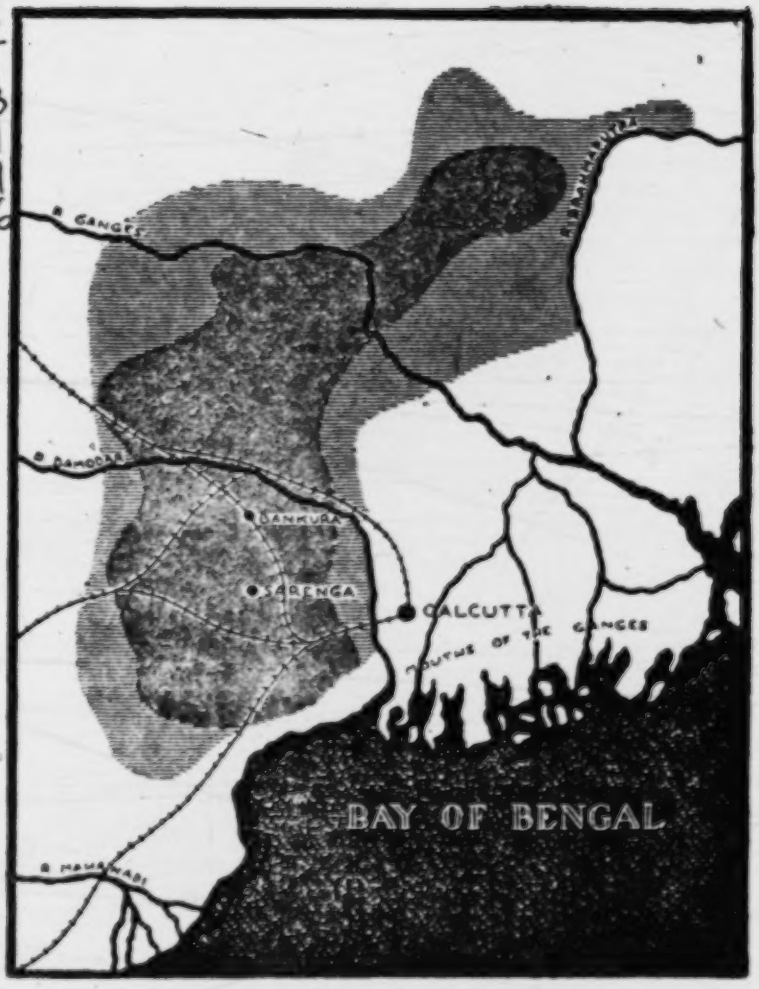

MAP OF EASTERN INDIA

The heavy shading represents areas where the Santals form ten per cent. or more of the population, the lighter shading where they form less than ten per cent. See also statistical addendum to Chapter I.

[P. iv]

Frontispiece

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

CHAPTER I

THE MAKING OF A PEOPLE

THE Santals are one of the largest of the tribal peoples of India; at the census of 1931 they numbered over two and a half million. Their villages are widely distributed over the area which lies between eighty-six and eighty-eight meridians east longitude and between twenty-two and twenty-six degrees north latitude. They are also found farther to the north-east, where some have settled in North Bengal and Western Assam. They are the most easterly of the great belt of primitive folk which stretches across Central India.

Where the Chota Nagpur plateau begins to give way to the Ganges plain the country is broken up into a series of ridges. Through the narrow valleys thus formed flow many streams which maintain a brief and furious life during the rains. There are few big rivers, and even these dry to nothingness in the hot season. In some parts there are ranges of low hills; in others conical-shaped hills rise abruptly from the undulating plain. The countryside is still for the most part well wooded, and the *sal* forests (*Shorea robusta*, Gartn.) contribute to the wellbeing of those who dwell in them. It is, however, a hard country in which to live, where the soil is rocky and the water supplies are scant.

Dr. B. S. Guha[1] has distinguished six main types among the races who inhabit India. The Santals belong to his second "main race", the Proto-Australoid, which he considers arrived in India soon after the Negritos. The name is given because of the similarity of racial type with Australian tribes. "We have no precise information as to when this race first came into India. It is found among the prehistoric skulls in the Tinnevelly district, and from references in early Sanskrit literature to 'Nishads', where they are described as noseless (*anash*) with dark skin colour and peculiar speech and habits, there can be no doubt that the Proto-Australoid tribes were meant."[2] The Santals are short in stature, and among them the broad flat nose with a sunken nose ridge is fairly common. They frequently have wavy hair; sometimes it is curly, though it is never frizzy. They share all these characteristics with other primitive tribes in the same group. Dr. Guha has cautiously attempted to state

[1] B. S. Guha, *Oxford Pamphlets on Indian Affairs*, "Racial Elements in the Population", 1944.
[2] B. S. Guha, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

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When I saw the jet-black people, with a necklace of white beads about their necks, and their peculiar dress, if dress it might be called, I was more confirmed in my opinion. I immediately alighted from my horse and inquired if that was a village of the Coles, but was not a little surprised at being so soon transported from the Oriyas to a people who could not understand a word I said. I looked about with astonishment at the romantic change, till at length I found an old man who could speak broken Oriya, of whom I gained the following information. He said they were not Coles, but Santals."[1] The author of the *Annals* relied largely on information supplied to him by the Rev. Jeremiah Phillips, who was a pioneer in the study of the language. The following occurs in the Annual Report of the mission for the year 1846: "During the past year Brother Phillips has acquired some knowledge of the language of this people (the Santals), by which he has been able to commence efforts for their improvement, which it is believed will result in great good to this hitherto neglected portion of the inhabitants of Orissa. He has performed a journey of some two or three weeks among them, which was very serviceable and interesting to him. He has published a tract of 8 pages, which is the first work ever published in the Santal dialect."

The Santals have been living in South-West Bengal for at least three hundred years. It is probable that they have been there for about five hundred years. There is agreement among the authorities that they moved to their present sites from the more hilly districts of Chota Nagpur farther west. It has been computed that the village of Rangibari in Bankura district is over three hundred years old.[2] Such a long period of residence on the one site is exceptional; the great majority of the Santal villages of today cannot look back on so long a history. Wherever a tradition regarding the founders of a village has survived, one finds that the first settlers moved to their present abode from no great distance away. Regarding Barikul, we are told: "The one who tied the brown hen here was Haru Mañjhi, whose family came first from Aurasuri in Bogri—a distance of about thirty-five miles. They say that formerly there were many wild elephants in Bogri, and for fear of the elephants many of the inhabitants fled to other parts. Sorup and Haru

[1] This and the following quotation I owe to the kindness of the Rev. A. A. Berg, who enabled me to see early reports in his possession.

[2] M. C. McAlpin, *A Report on the Condition of the Santals in the Districts of Birghum, Bankura, Midnapore and North Balasore*, IV (20), Bengal Government, 1909.

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Sorup and Haru Mañjhi were two brothers. Sorup Mañjhi left Bogri because of the elephants, came to Raipur and settled. He had established himself well at the end of a year or two, so he told his younger brother: 'Leave Bogri, where the elephants are on the increase. Some day you will be trampled on and killed. Come with me.' Haru Mañjhi thought to himself: 'True enough, many men have been killed; perchance they will kill me.' Thinking thus, he took all his children, left Bogri and came to Raipur. From Rautora in Raipur they established a village in Barikul, Sorup Mañjhi saying to his brother: 'Go to, brother, put up your huts and stay at Barikul.' Then Haru Mañjhi went out with his children, his cattle and his goats, and built his huts there. He had four boys and two girls; the girls they brought with them from Bogri, and the four boys were born in Barikul. He obtained sons-in-law for his daughters to live with them, and one or two tenants came together. In this way the village increased to many houses." Wild elephants, of which there are not so many now as formerly, do still on occasion cause great damage to ripening crops. Barikul was founded five generations ago, a period of about one hundred years. At that time there was also a possibility that by moving his abode the Santal could regain a measure of independence. The Santals have been spoken of as formerly "nomadic".[1] It may be that in the strict sense of the word they were in some remote period nomads. For any period of which we have record, however, they have been agriculturalists, though food-gathering and hunting provide them with important subsidiary occupations. Their migrations have been due to pressure of one kind and another. They prefer to move to forest lands where they will have a hard struggle to establish new settlements than to remain where they have to defend their holdings and their livelihood against hostile forces, whether these be wild animals, malignant actions directed against individuals or the community from the unseen world, or the oppression of landlords and moneylenders.

The last cause operated to produce a great northward movement in the early decades of the nineteenth century, and finally goaded them into rebellion. The Santal rebellion has been frequently described.[2] It took place in an area remote from the Bankura district, but it has to be mentioned because it created

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Santal Parganas*, ed. L. S. S. O'Malley, Calcutta, 1910.

[2] J. H. Hutton, *Modern India and the West*, ed. L. S. S. O'Malley, Oxford, 1941. Chapter on the Primitive Tribes, pp. 417-44. Also bibliography.

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up for non-payment of the accumulated debt, which by then was a considerably larger sum. They were thus compelled to make new agreements with their landlord at an enhanced rent and with inferior rights. The later passage of legislation has done little to lift the burden of despair about the future which is an unhappy characteristic of Santal life today. Such incidents explain in no small measure the cry of the heart which is heard from time to time: "Give us back our land." It is some consolation that the Act of 1918, followed by legislation during the last twenty years aimed at improving the status of the peasantry in Bengal, has brought to a close some of the worst chapters in a long and sordid story.

The community life of the Santal centres in his village, and is so organized as to make common action inevitable in social, economic and religious affairs. The houses are built on either side of the village street, which must be left wide enough for two bullock carts to pass each other. This street extends from east to west, the eastern end being known as the upper end. The houses, set close together, have their main door opening on to the village street, and each household is responsible for the state of the road outside its own residence. It is here in the village that the Santal learns how to live; here he is initiated into the traditional loyalties of the tribe, and the village of his birth exercises a deep influence over him all his days.

The village headman, or *manjhi*, is the man of greatest consequence in the community. The post is hereditary, and it passes ordinarily to the eldest son of the former headman. When the direct line of succession fails through lack of sons or from incapacity on the part of the natural heir, the office passes on to a brother or near relative on the paternal side. The history of the village is preserved in the tradition handed down concerning the headman's ancestry. For example, at Sarenga they tell a story of the three brothers who were the founders of the village and divided the village offices between them. Among them Lokhon has acquired the greatest measure of renown, and he is commemorated by a shrine outside the present village. The story is told that he died suddenly, and before the news of his death had spread through the village his spirit took possession of a young man sitting in the courtyard of a house some distance away, and through him Lokhon told the villagers that they were to make a special shrine for him. There is a ceremony at the beginning of each new year which suggests that at one time the appointment of the head-